

# Rhode Island Charter Public Schools: **2016 Request for Charter School Applicants**

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Office of College and Career Readiness  
**Rhode Island Department of Education**

Release date:  
*July 20, 2016*

For charter schools proposing to open in:  
*Fall 2017*

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*Rhode Island Mayoral Academies*

*SUNY Charter Schools Institute*

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## Introduction

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In 1995, the Rhode Island General Assembly passed a law permitting teachers and school district personnel to establish new public schools. The law provided these schools some flexibility from district mandates, empowering teachers to innovate around school models and methods of instruction. Several years later, the state legislature amended the law, this time allowing for nonprofit organizations or Rhode Island colleges and universities to establish new public schools again with the goal of encouraging innovation and improvement in student performance. In 2008, another amendment passed enabling “mayoral academies,” a unique type of charter school where mayors establish regional charter schools, with the ultimate goal of improving student outcomes and strengthening communities.

Though Rhode Island’s charter schools have unique qualities, they share characteristics common among charter schools: they are free, independent, nonselective public schools of choice. Charter schools have flexibility and autonomy to devise curriculum, choose instructional methods, and develop a mission that best meets the needs of students. The governing boards of charter schools are self-appointing and are typically independent from district governance, policies, and procedures. In exchange for these freedoms, all charter schools must improve student performance, operate a successful organization, and act as responsible stewards of public funds, according to the terms of a charter. Charters are issued by the Rhode Island the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (the Council) to charter school boards, and describe each school’s academic and operational targets, which are the manifestations of the promises charter schools make to students, families, and the state of Rhode Island.

Charter schools in Rhode Island currently serve over 7,000 students (about 5% of the public school population) in grades K-12. The majority of Rhode Island charter schools are in urban areas, but charter schools exist throughout the state, and enroll student populations as different and diverse as our communities.

### Request for Charter School Applications

Rhode Island’s *Request for Charter School Applications* sets forth the criteria and expectations for those developing an idea for a new public charter school. State law charges the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) with accepting and evaluating charter school proposals, and recommending those to the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education (the Council) that are likely to result in high achievement and innovative methods of education. The Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education has the final authority to approve, renew, and revoke charters.

RIDE will prioritize proposals that focus on increasing the number of high quality education options for educationally disadvantaged students: economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, or limited English proficient students (also referred to as English learners or English language learners).

Throughout this document, links and notes are provided to assist charter school applicants. Other guidance documents can be found on the RIDE website. These materials do not attempt nor profess to provide guidance on every federal, state and local law or regulation that is applicable to charter schools. The applicant is responsible for submitting Applications and managing schools that are in compliance with all appropriate laws and regulations. As applicants work to complete Applications, please feel free to reach out to RIDE with questions.

## Rhode Island Charter Public Schools Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs):

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### 1. What is a charter school?

Rhode Island's charter schools are public schools governed by independent boards and free from many of the policies and requirements of traditional public schools. They are secular and tuition-free. Enrollment is nonselective and conducted by random lottery.

Charter schools have flexibility and autonomy in areas including curriculum, staffing, organization, and budget. In exchange, each charter school must demonstrate that it is an academic success and a well-managed, sustainable organization.

### 2. Must charter schools comply with federal laws and regulations?

Charter schools are subject to the same federal statutory and regulatory requirements applicable to traditional Rhode Island public schools, including laws governing special education and accessibility to students learning English.

### 3. What laws govern the creation of charter schools in Rhode Island?

Enabling legislation allowing for the creation of public charter schools in Rhode Island was initially approved by the Rhode Island General Assembly in 1995, amended in 1998, again in 2009, in 2010, and again in 2016.

The “Charter Public School Act of Rhode Island” (RIGL§ 16-77 through 16-77.4) can be found at the following links: Chapter [16-77](#); Chapter [16-77.1](#); Chapter [16-77.2](#); Chapter [16-77.3](#); Chapter [16-77.4](#). The Regulations Governing Rhode Island Public Charter Schools can be found [here](#). Rhode Island has three types of charter schools: district charter schools, independent charter schools, and mayoral academies. Each charter school type is distinguished by its establishing entity and its level of autonomy, particularly around staffing and compensation.

*District charter schools* are established by existing public schools, groups of public school personnel, public school districts or groups of school districts and may be a new school or the conversion of an existing school. The establishment of district charter schools requires coordination with district officials and teachers, as well as agreement from any collective bargaining unit(s) if the charter school intends to have any provisions of existing agreements not apply.

*Independent charter schools* are established by colleges or universities within the State of Rhode Island, or by Rhode Island nonprofit organizations that have existed for at least two (2) years and exist for a substantial reason other than to operate a school. Independent charter schools that are seeking approval as a network charter, must have written support from each town or city council of each proposed enrolling district.

*Mayoral Academies* are created by a mayor or elected town administrator of any city or town within the State of Rhode Island, acting by or through a nonprofit organization established for said purpose. Mayoral academies enroll students from both urban and non-urban communities, and a mayor must

serve as the school's Board chair. Unlike the other two types of charter schools, mayoral academies may elect out of statutory requirements to pay prevailing wages and benefits, participate in the state teachers' retirement system, and provide teachers tenure. Proposed mayoral academies must have approval from each city or town regarding participation in the academy's enrolling communities (catchment area). Approval must be from each mayor or in the absence of a mayor, the city or town council via a resolution or ordinance.

#### **4. What is a network Charter?**

A proposed charter will be considered a network charter school if the proposed charter school intends to include both elementary and secondary schools or multiple elementary and/or multiple secondary schools. Multiple elementary or secondary schools means the schools operate independently from one another with individual school budgets and school administrators (such as a school principal). The schools could be co-located; however, the schools run a separate lottery and enrollment process and would receive distinct school codes for statewide data reporting.

#### **5. Who approves and oversees charter schools in Rhode Island?**

The Rhode Island Council on Elementary and Secondary Education is the only body in Rhode Island with the authority to grant charters, which can be granted after a recommendation of the Commissioner. Charters are awarded for a period of up to five years, and are subject to renewal or revocation at the discretion of the Board.

The Rhode Island Department of Education's charter school staff facilitates the reviews of new charter school proposals and evaluates existing charter schools. The staff assists the Commissioner and the Board in making decisions relative to charter schools as well as setting charter school policy.

#### **6. What is the Rhode Island Department of Education's vision for charter schools?**

In keeping with the priorities articulated in the [Basic Education Program Regulations](#), charter schools are established to ensure that all students achieve at academic levels necessary for post-secondary readiness. With greater autonomy, charter schools are expected to serve as high-performing alternatives to Rhode Island's traditional public schools as demonstrated through measurable student achievement outcomes. Accordingly, charters will provide school choices and opportunities for Rhode Island families—particularly increasing the number of high quality education options for educationally disadvantaged students

Charter schools are intended to be places where creative approaches merge with research and best practice in academically rigorous learning environments. Expectations will be high for all members of each school community, and a commitment to continuous improvement will drive all processes. Charters will inspire students, maintain high levels of engagement, close achievement gaps, and serve as models of distinguished instructional practice to the end that all Rhode Island students are prepared for the college and career of their choice.

#### **7. What is a charter?**

Once a school has received final approval by the Council to operate as a charter school in Rhode Island, the school's board of directors becomes formally accountable to the terms of a charter. In



general, the school's board is responsible for the academic and organizational (including financial) health of the school, and ensuring that the school complies with all applicable laws and regulations.

In Rhode Island, a final charter confers the authority to operate a public school. The final charter is developed after preliminary approval of an applicant group's proposal has been received from the Council. Final approval will not be granted by the Board until the final charter has been developed.

The charter includes key elements of the educational plan, program details (such as enrollment expectations), assurances required by statute, and the performance targets a school must meet during the five-year charter term. A school's accountability plan, which is a part of the charter, includes standard targets of academic performance and organizational viability and may also include school-specific targets. Schools will be evaluated against these targets, and results will make up the evidence for renewal decisions.

## **8. How are charter schools evaluated?**

The autonomy provided to charter schools comes with increased accountability for results. Toward the end of a charter term (typically the fourth year of a five-year term), schools are subject to renewal visits and evaluations, the results of which lead to a recommendation of renewal or non-renewal.

At all times, student learning and instructional excellence will serve as the primary evidence for charter school decision making and accountability. Throughout a school's charter term, RIDE collects evidence in the following performance areas:

- Student Academic Performance
- Financial Viability and Sustainability
- Organizational Quality
- Legal and Regulatory Compliance

This rigorous evaluation process includes an analysis of student outcome data, a site visit process, and a review of key organizational outcomes.

## **9. What can lead to charter revocation?**

According to the statutory role of the Commissioner in charter school oversight, the Council may revoke the charter of a charter school at any time if the school:

- (1) Materially violates any provision contained in the charter;
- (2) Fails to meet or pursue the educational objectives contained in the charter;
- (3) Fails to comply with fiscal accountability procedures as specified in the charter;
- (4) Violates provisions of law that have not been granted variance by the Council; or
- (5) After three (3) consecutive years of operation, is not a "high-performing charter school," defined as a charter public school that has demonstrated overall success.

## **10. How are charter schools funded?**

Charter schools, like all other public schools in Rhode Island, receive state and local (municipal) funding through [formulas](#) described in law. Charter schools are also eligible to receive federal funds, including Title program funds, IDEA, and Medicaid.

In addition to public formula-driven funds, charter schools may elect to seek additional funding through grants, awards, loans, or donations. It is typical for Rhode Island districts and charter schools to seek some level of additional funding to support academic programs and operational improvements. In particular, charter schools have sought to raise additional funds to pay for school facilities. Unlike district public schools, which typically operate in buildings owned by municipalities, charter schools must pay to lease or purchase space. Without additional funding, these costs are paid by public operating funds, which could result in a decrease in spending on academic and other programming. In cases of major capital improvements, some funds may be available for charter schools through Rhode Island's [Necessity of School Construction](#) process.

Funding information for all school districts, including charter schools, is collected by the state's [Uniform Chart of Accounts \(UCOA\)](#) and reported annually.

## **11. What types of students attend charter schools in Rhode Island?**

Charter schools serve over 7,000 students in Rhode Island, or about 5% of the public school population. Rhode Island law requires that charter schools be open to any student regardless of background, characteristics, ability, or prior performance. One of the purposes of Rhode Island's charter school law is to encourage the development of schools that serve the different learning styles and needs of public school students and to offer public school students innovative choices. Accordingly, charter schools may be established with a special emphasis on a particular subject matter or to serve specific targeted student populations.

Even if a charter school has a special focus, each charter school is responsible for reaching out to all parts of its enrolling community. In the event that more students apply to attend a charter school than the school can accommodate, students will be selected randomly by lottery (except for preferences for siblings of enrolled students, school staff, and founding members).

## **12. What is the process for reviewing a proposed charter? How long will it take?**

The first step in the charter proposal review cycle is the submission of a Statement of Intent. This is a basic overview of the charter school's mission and plan.

Charter proposals are reviewed by an advisory committee of educational professionals, and are posted for public comment. At least two public hearings are held in the communities where the school proposes to open. After public comment and the committee review, a rigorous interview is conducted with the applicants. Once the proposal review is complete and all evidence gathered, the Commissioner selects which proposals to recommend to the Council for preliminary approval. An overview and general timeline of this process can be found on page 15.

### 13. Who is eligible to establish a charter school in Rhode Island?

In Rhode Island, the persons or entities eligible to establish charter schools are defined in state law ([RIGL 16-77 2.1](#)):

- Persons or entities eligible to establish district charter schools are limited to:
  - existing public schools
  - groups of public school personnel
  - public school districts, or
  - a group of school districts.
- Persons or entities eligible to establish independent charter schools are limited to:
  - Rhode Island nonprofit organizations provided that the nonprofit organizations shall have existed for at least two (2) years for reasons other than to operate a school
  - Colleges or universities within Rhode Island
- Persons or entities eligible to establish mayoral academies are limited to:
  - Rhode Island mayors or town administrators, acting by or through a nonprofit organization established for said purpose.

Statements of Intent, full charter proposals, and all related materials at the point of establishing a school must be submitted to RIDE by an eligible person or a representative of an eligible entity.

### 14. At what point in time is a charter school established?

After eligible charter applications are evaluated, the Commissioner decides which applications to recommend to the Council for preliminary approval. In cases where the Council awards preliminary approval, a new nonprofit entity must be incorporated with the Rhode Island Office of the Secretary of State. The new nonprofit entity, through an independent and properly formed board of directors, shall: 1) have the intention and sole purpose of operating a public charter school; and 2) abide by all laws and regulations relating to public boards, including Open Meetings Law and Rhode Island Code of Ethics Regulations.

The governing board of the new nonprofit entity must be formed in accordance with the RIDE-approved by laws submitted with the Charter Proposal. Fiscal policies must be approved and in place prior to receiving charter school planning grants; the governing board will be responsible for the oversight of these funds if they are awarded.

Authorization to operate as a public charter school requires final approval by the Council. The Commissioner may recommend final approval after all readiness criteria are met, as outlined in C-1-4 of the [Rhode Island Charter School Regulations](#).

After the development of a final Charter and an affirmative vote of final approval by the Council, a Charter is granted to the nonprofit entity established to operate the charter school.

**15. To what extent must the persons or entities that established the charter school remain affiliated with the new charter school?**

Once a charter school is established, the establishing person(s) or entity and the governing board of the charter school may decide how they wish to structure any ongoing affiliation or relationship. Staff or board members of the establishing entity may opt to serve on the governing board of the charter school, but must be mindful of any conflicts of interest that may arise, especially in cases where the establishing entity and the charter school begin a contractual relationship to render services to the charter school.

Responsibility or Contribution	Establishing Persons/ Entities	Nonprofit Entity Designing and Operating the Charter School	
		<i>After Preliminary Approval</i>	<i>After Final Approval</i>
Apply to establish a charter school	X		
Provide expertise and support as part of applicant group	X		
Recipients of a charter and accountable to its terms			X
Manage finances designed for school planning and operations		X	X
Request amendments to final Charter			X
Seek charter renewal			X

**16. Can charter schools access startup funding?**

Preliminarily approved charter proposals may apply to RIDE for charter school program (CSP) startup funding, if available, which is a program of the US Department of Education. The first portion of this funding is dedicated to *planning*, which is accessible prior to final approval by the Council. The second portion of startup funding is for *implementation*, which is accessible after final approval.

High performing charter schools may also apply for CSP *dissemination* grants to partner with other public schools to share best practices. All CSP funding is contingent on the quality of submissions and availability of funds.

## **17. Where can I find the most up-to-date materials and contact information for Rhode Island charter school-related issues?**

The Rhode Island charter school statute can be found here:

<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Statutes/TITLE16/16-77/INDEX.HTM>

The “charter schools” portion of the RIDE website, including contact information, can be found here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/studentsfamilies/ripublicschools/charterschools.aspx>

The Basic Education Program regulations (BEP) can be found here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InformationAccountability/Accountability/BasicEducationProgram.aspx>

The Regulations Governing Rhode Island Public Charter Schools can be found here:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/Portals/0/Uploads/Documents/Students-and-Families-Great-Schools/Charter-Schools/Charter-Regulations-for-Promulgation-2011%5B1%5D.pdf>

For information on special education laws and regulations see:

<http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/SpecialEducation/SpecialEducationProgramming.aspx>

For information on the laws, regulations, and best practices relating to English language learners, see: <http://www.ride.ri.gov/StudentsFamilies/EnglishLanguageLearners.aspx>

## **18. How can parents and guardians learn more or apply for enrollment?**

Enrollment in a charter school is nonselective and conducted by random lottery. Each school must use a standard template for the enrollment applicant. While most of the application must remain standardized, schools may reformat the application in designated areas to include the school’s logo, school address, submission deadline, and submission instructions. Parents and guardians must complete an application with each school they may wish to enroll their student. Individual schools will have specific information about application deadlines and methods of applying. A list of charter schools can be found [here](#).

## Rhode Island Charter Public Schools

### Application Deadlines and Submission Instructions

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<b>Deadlines</b>	The deadline for receipt of all materials is <b>5:00PM</b> on the date indicated.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Statement of Intent: Monday August 8, 2016</li><li>• Optional Application Deadline Friday September 23, 2016</li><li>• Final Charter Application: Thursday September 29, 2016</li></ul>

Applications received for the optional deadline will be reviewed to ensure completeness and applicants will be able to resubmit any missing information by the final deadline. Incomplete applications or materials received after these deadlines will not be considered.

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<b>Format</b>	Both the Statement of Intent and Charter Application should apply the following:
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• One-inch margins</li><li>• 12-point font</li><li>• A table of contents that references all attachments</li><li>• Page numbers (including on attachments)</li><li>• Limits:<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>○ Statement of Intent: word limits noted on requirements</li><li>○ Charter Application: 80 pages single spaced, excluding attachments</li></ul></li><li>• Use footnotes for all references and citations. <u>All excerpts must be cited.</u></li><li>• All submissions must be proofread.</li></ul>

**All complete submissions will be available to the public and posted on the RIDE website.**

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#### Submission

For Statements of Intent, applicants must submit:

- one (1) electronic PDF file (with completed and scanned signature page)
- one (1) original hard copy, bound, with original signatures

For first submissions of Charter Applications, applicants must submit:

- one (1) electronic PDF file (with completed and scanned signature page)

After Charter Applications are deemed complete by RIDE, applicants must submit:

- one (1) original hard copy, bound, with original signatures; and
- one (1) electronic PDF file (with completed and scanned signature page)

All appendices and attachments should be integrated within the bound hard copy and within a single PDF file. Please do not mail or email components separately.

#### **Hard copies should be mailed to:**

Office of College and Career Readiness  
Attn: Stephen Osborn, Chief for Innovation  
Rhode Island Department of Education  
255 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02903

#### **PDF files should be emailed to:**

[RICharters@ride.ri.gov](mailto:RICharters@ride.ri.gov)

## Rhode Island Charter Public Schools

### Application Review Process

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- Step 1: Statement of Intent** *August 2016*
- Statement of Intent submissions are due on August 8, 2016. The purpose of the Statement of Intent is to provide a brief conceptual overview for the proposed charter school and an introduction to the applicant group prior to submitting a full proposal. The Statement of Intent also enables the Charter School team to prepare for technical assistance trainings.
- Step 2: Charter Application** *September 2016*
- Application submissions are due on September 29, 2016, with an optional deadline of September 23, 2016. Any application received by September 23<sup>rd</sup> will be reviewed to ensure completeness and applicants will be able to resubmit any missing information by the final deadline. RIDE reserves the right to reject substantially incomplete applications or request additional information or revisions. Any application received after the final deadline or is not complete upon submission after September 23, 2016 will be rejected. RIDE will notify all applicants of completion status.
- Proposed network charters may submit applications with incomplete written support from proposed enrolling communities. However, written support must be obtained prior to the Commissioner providing a recommendation for preliminary approval.
- District charter school applicants:* once deemed complete, district charter school applications must also be submitted to the school committee of the district where the district charter school is proposing to be established.
- Step 3: Public Comment** *October/November 2016*
- Satisfactory and complete applications will be posted for public comment for a 60-day period. During this time, at least two (2) public hearings will be held in the community where the proposed charter school is to be located.
- Step 4: Application Review** *October/November 2016*
- Complete applications will be reviewed by an advisory committee comprised of education professionals from inside and outside of RIDE with a range of content expertise.
- Step 5: Capacity Interview** *Late November 2016*
- The capacity interview is a half-day in-person interview designed to yield further detail about the applicants' plan and their capacity to carry it out. Attendance will be expected from all members of the applicant group.
- Step 6: Commissioner's Recommendation** *December 2016 / January 2017*
- The Commissioner recommends for preliminary approval those proposals most likely to develop into high-performing charter schools.
- Step 7: Council Vote of Preliminary Approval** *January 2017*
- Preliminary approval is a formal endorsement of the conceptual design of the charter school. It does not grant a charter, nor signify readiness to begin operation.

## Rhode Island Charter Public Schools Readiness Period

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### **Orientation:**

*February/March 2017*

Shortly after receiving preliminary approval, applicants will be required to attend a readiness orientation that introduces them to the steps necessary to obtain final authorization and to successfully open a charter school.

### **Planning Funds:**

*January/February 2017*

If funds are available, applicants may apply for startup funds for preliminarily approved applicants through the US Department of Education's Charter Schools Program (CSP). CSP startup grants are competitive grants designed to support the planning of new charter schools. Applicants will be notified during the review process if Federal CSP startup grants are available.

### **Readiness:**

*January through March/April 2017*

Final authorization to operate depends upon the applicants having completed all readiness criteria. RIDE Charter School Regulation C-1-4 describes a set of readiness criteria that must be met prior to receiving final approval by the Council. These criteria include forming a public board, securing a facility, hiring staff, enrolling students, and developing a final charter. A readiness process, following the readiness handbook, will be followed by the applicant in coordination with RIDE.

### **Final Charter:**

*April 2017*

RIDE will provide to the applicant a draft charter template, which will then be developed into a Final Charter. The Final Charter includes the specific rights, duties and responsibilities of charter schools, including performance criteria and standards for Rhode Island charter schools.

### **Final Approval:**

*April/May 2017*

Applicants who successfully complete all readiness criteria may receive a recommendation of final approval from the Commissioner. Informed by this recommendation, the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education will decide whether to grant final authorization to operate.



## Statement of Intent: Overview & Requirements

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The submission of a Statement of Intent is the first step in the process for proposing a Rhode Island charter school. The Statement of Intent is an initial opportunity for an applicant to describe the purpose and concept for the proposed charter school. The Statement of Intent also provides RIDE with an opportunity to plan technical assistance for applicants toward submitting a full proposal.

The components of the Statement of Intent are:

- Statement of Intent cover sheet (including original signatures)
  - Statement of Intent letter, which must respond to each of the areas below.
- 

- A. Please provide a mission statement that accurately and succinctly conveys the mission of your proposed charter school. Your statement should be written for a general audience, free from jargon and technical terminology. It should state what your school will provide, for whom, and how (i.e. using what methods?). ***max 50 words***
- B. Please describe how your proposed charter school, will meet the following criteria:
- Addressing a problem or need, specifically how the proposed charter will meet RIDE's priority of serving the needs of and increasing high quality education options for educationally disadvantaged students.
  - Ensuring a strong, viable organization over time.
  - Sharing aspects of the program with others for the improvement of education.
- max 800 words***

## Rhode Island Charter Public Schools Statement of Intent Cover Sheet

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[PDF available on RIDE website: [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)]

Name of Proposed Charter School:

Proposed Location of School:

Proposed Enrolling Communities/Districts:

Primary Contact:

Proposed Role with Charter School:

Address:

City/State/ZIP:

Phone:

Email:

Proposed enrollment during initial five-year charter term:

<i><b>School Year</b></i>	<i><b>Grade Levels</b></i>	<i><b>Total Enrollment</b></i>	<i><b># of school sites</b></i>
2017/18			
2018/19			
2019/20			
2020/21			
2021/22			

Proposed grade levels when fully expanded:

Total student enrollment when fully expanded:

Total number of school sites when fully expanded:

Charter School Type:

Establishing persons or entities (in accordance with RIGL § 16-77.2-1, 16-77.3-1 or 16-77.4-1):

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### **Person or Representative of Entity Establishing the School:**

Signature:

Print Name:

Position/Title:

Date:

### **Additional Representative from Applicant Group:**

Signature:

Print Name:

Proposed Role with Charter School:

Date:

## Rhode Island Charter Public Schools

### Charter Application: Overview & Requirements

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Rhode Island General Law 16-77-3.1(c) asserts that charter schools are established to: improve pupil learning by creating schools with rigorous academic standards for performance; increase learning opportunities, especially for students who are identified as educationally disadvantaged or at-risk; encourage the use of innovative teaching methods; create opportunities for teachers; provide parents and students with expanded choices; and encourage parent and community involvement in public schools. Guided by these directives, RIDE accepts charter school applications and evaluates them in accordance with the requirements here in. A complete and full charter school application is comprised of the following components:

- *Application cover sheet.* The cover sheet must be complete and contain two signatures: one from a representative of the establishing entity, in accordance with the type of charter school being proposed; and at least one signature from an additional member of the applicant group who plans to have a substantial and ongoing role with the charter school if it is approved.
- *Executive summary.* The executive summary should provide an accurate and succinct overview of the proposal. The executive summary may be shared directly with the press and other stakeholders during the review period.
- *Application narrative.* The body of the proposal should contain a comprehensive plan and vision for the charter school, according to the prompts and requirements in this *Request for Charter School Applications*.
- *Attachments.* The application requirements prompt for mandatory attachments, which must be included in the submission of a complete application. Voluntary attachments may also be included.

Mandatory attachments are as follows:

- Resumes of founding group
- Resumes of prospective board members
- Draft bylaws
- Job description of school leader
- Audit of managing/partnering entity (if applicable)
- Annual report of managing/partnering entity (if applicable)
- Draft term sheet or contract with managing/partnering entity(if applicable)
- Draft school calendar
- Five-year budget projection
- Written Support: If proposing a network charter or mayoral academy (refer to FAQ #3 & #4), provide written support from proposed enrolling communities. If written support is not available, explain why and provide a plan for obtaining written support by the anticipated date of preliminary approval.

Voluntary attachments may include:

- Job descriptions of staff members
- Resume of school leader candidate and/or other leadership staff
- Letters of support

# Rhode Island Charter Public Schools Charter School Application Cover Sheet

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[PDF available on RIDE website: [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov)]

Name of Proposed Charter School:

Proposed Location of School:

Proposed Enrolling Communities/Districts:

Primary Contact:

Proposed Role with Charter School:

Address:

City/State/ZIP:

Phone:

Email:

Proposed enrollment during initial five-year charter term:

<i><b>School Year</b></i>	<i><b>Grade Levels</b></i>	<i><b>Total Enrollment</b></i>	<i><b># of school sites</b></i>
2017/18			
2018/19			
2019/20			
2020/21			
2021/22			

Proposed grade levels when fully expanded:

Total student enrollment when fully expanded:

Total number of school sites when fully expanded:

Charter School Type:

Establishing persons or entities (in accordance with RIGL § 16-77.2-1, 16-77.3-1 or 16-77.4-1):

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## **Person or Representative of Entity Establishing the School:**

Signature:

Print Name:

Position/Title:

Date:

## **Additional Representative from Applicant Group:**

Signature:

Print Name:

Proposed Role with Charter School:

Date:

## Executive Summary

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Provide an executive summary, *no more than two pages in length*, which summarizes your charter school proposal. The executive summary should include:

- a mission statement
- the need for establishing the school
- the goals of the school
- a description of the individuals who comprise the applicant group
- an overview of the school's educational program
- a description of any unique features of the program and mission-specific areas of focus
- an overview of the school's governance and management structures
- a discussion of teaching at the school, including support and supervision for teachers
- an overview of the organizational plan, including any relationships with organizations that will be major partners or providers such as school districts, charter management organizations, or colleges and universities
- a summary of what the school ultimately hopes to accomplish.

The executive summary should not contain new information or content that is otherwise not included in the proposal narrative and attachments.

The executive summary, together with the application cover sheet, should provide an accurate and succinct overview of the proposal. These documents may be shared directly with the press and other stakeholders once the proposal is deemed complete and posted publicly for review and comment.

## **I. Mission Statement**

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A mission statement should clearly and concisely communicate the core purpose of your proposed charter school. It should answer the following questions: What will your school provide? To whom? How (using what methods)?

A mission statement should be inspiring yet attainable. Stakeholders who read the mission statement should be able to know if and when the mission is being achieved; progress should be measurable. Abstain from using clichés, jargon, and technical terminology.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide a mission statement for the proposed school that is meaningful, manageable, and measurable.
  - Provide a brief analysis of the mission statement that discusses the specific words selected to convey the mission.
-

## II. Community Need and Support

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This section should communicate why the applicants are proposing to start a new charter school for this particular community or communities, and how the school will become a part of the wider community.

Applicants proposing enrollment areas not tied to city or district boundaries (e.g. statewide catchment area, virtual programs, etc.) must still consider how the following prompts apply to the school structure they are proposing.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Describe the community or communities from which the proposed school intends to draw students, including community demographics.
  - Describe the target student population, especially in the context of the priority to serve educationally disadvantaged students
  - Include a specific rationale for selecting this particular community, and highlight how the proposed school will enhance or expand opportunities already available within this community. Strong responses will go beyond an analysis of state test scores or a general argument for school choice.
  - Discuss the degree to which the applicant group has consulted with community members, including the strategies used to solicit community input regarding the educational and programmatic needs of students.
  - Describe the extent to which community members will continue to be engaged during future planning and operations of the school, and the nature and extent of any ongoing involvement in the governance and/or operations of the school.
  - Describe the extent to which community partners or relationships will create opportunities for students and support the mission and success of the school.
-

### III. Goals

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Goals are the manifestation of the promises a new charter school makes to students, families, and the state of Rhode Island. In this section, applicants will describe the goals of the proposed charter school. Each goal should indicate a specific target to be met, using a specific metric within a certain time period.

Charter schools in Rhode Island are held to common measures of academic, financial and organizational performance. Specifically:

- Student Academic Performance
- Financial Viability and Sustainability
- Organizational Quality
- Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Student academic performance is most important in annual performance reviews and renewal decisions. Rhode Island's statewide accountability system will form the basis of student academic performance reviews and applicants should demonstrate an understanding of how schools in Rhode Island are measured and held accountable. As the state transitions under ESSA, these measures will also change. (<http://www.ride.ri.gov/InformationAccountability/Accountability/SchoolClassifications.aspx> ).

Each charter school also has the opportunity to develop mission-specific goals and measures that evaluate the unique qualities of individual schools. Taken together, these goals form an Accountability Plan. Meeting these goals ensures that charter school is meeting the promises it has made. Failure to meet these goals will be reflected in annual reporting, and may result in nonrenewal or school closure.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide **at least three** goals that may be used to assess *academic progress* of students.  
One goal should be based on outcomes related the current statewide accountability system. Two additional academic goals should enable a deeper understanding of academic progress in core areas, and/or in subjects not currently tested using statewide assessments, and/or in grade levels not currently assessed using statewide assessments.
- Provide **at least two** goals that may be used to evaluate the *mission* of the proposed school (e.g. college course completion, progress relative to established competency standards, industry certifications, language acquisition, completion of portfolios, completion of artistic projects, etc.).
- Provide **at least two** additional goals that may be used to evaluate the *organizational strength* of the proposed school.
- Provide any additional goals or targets the applicants wish to propose to evaluate performance of the proposed school.

If issued preliminary approval, school representatives and RIDE will meet to develop a Final Charter prior to final approval. At that point in time, RIDE and the school will work together to determine which goals included here (or refined versions of them) will be included directly into the school's Accountability Plan.



## IV. Educational Program

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A clear and focused vision for an educational program is crucial to the success of a charter school proposal. Responses to the following prompts should inspire confidence and describe how your educational program will serve the needs of all students.

Beware of providing an “everything but the kitchen sink” educational program description that lacks focus and promises too much. Beware also of general descriptions that do not present a clear vision of what you intend to do and how it will work. Reviewers realize that every detail of educational program decisions may not be finalized at the point of proposal submission. In these areas, rather than leaving sections blank or vague, please provide a convincing explanation as to how you will fill gaps that may currently exist in your program during the school’s planning year. Do not overuse the promise of future planning, however; reviewers expect a substantially clear and detailed plan at the point of proposal. Do not assume that reviewers will understand references to specific programs or products. Include context, explanations, and citations where necessary.

### IV(a). Guiding Principles

A charter school’s guiding principles should define a set of core beliefs and values that forms the basis for the rest of the program, including the pedagogical approach, curriculum decisions, assessment practices, school culture, and academic and organizational goal-setting. The principles should be informed by research, experience, and proven practice.

*Proposals are required to:*

- List the guiding principles of the charter school.
- Define or clearly explain each of the guiding principles.
- Discuss the research and experiences that have informed the formation of these guiding principles.
- Include examples of how each principle will translate into actions and decisions at your proposed school.
- Provide examples of role models—schools, programs, or individuals—who are succeeding using related principles under similar conditions.

### IV(b). Curriculum and Coursework

Rhode Island’s charter schools have the freedom to choose and/or develop curricula and courses of study that best serve the diverse needs of the student population and reflect the mission of the school. In this section, reviewers should be provided with a comprehensive sense of the breadth and depth of the program, including how curriculum and coursework will align across grade levels. Regardless of whether the curriculum is purchased, previously developed, or internally developed, it must be clear that it will be aligned with [Common Core Standards](#) and other standards adopted by the state of Rhode Island, such as the [Next Generation Science Standards](#).

*Proposals are required to:*

- In a table organized by grade level, outline the course of study/ course offerings at the school. Include core academic subjects as well as special, elective, alternative, and other coursework.
- Provide a narrative that further explains the course of study and curriculum at the school. Include sufficient detail in areas of study that are specific to the mission of the school (e.g. engineering, arts, etc.). If decisions have not yet been made in certain areas of the curriculum, please explain how decisions will be made at a later date.
- Make a strong case in support of the curriculum. What research, experiences, and best practices support this curricular plan? Be sure to underscore how the course of study expands upon or enhances what is currently available to students.
- Note which standards are guiding decisions around curriculum, and provide an assurance that curriculum will align with appropriate standards.
- Describe how the school will manage the development, evaluation and refinement of curriculum over time.

#### **IV(c). Learning Environment and Pedagogy**

Please explain how specific instructional methods will ensure that your academic program is accessible and appropriate for all students at all levels. Focus on your target student community. Be sure to specify how these instructional practices will work to close performance gaps.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Describe examples of classroom environments for students at your proposed school. Include details around class size, class structure and classroom layout, differentiated by grade or subject as applicable.
- Describe several instructional methods and techniques that will be used to deliver the curriculum. Specify which instructional methods would remain consistent across subjects or across grade levels. Alternatively, discuss how instructional methods might differ by subject or as students grow.
- Make a case in support of these instructional methods. How will these methods work to accelerate student achievement? What research, experiences, and best practices support these decisions?

#### **IV(d). Specific Populations**

Charter schools are nonselective public schools and must be prepared to enroll and serve all students, including struggling students, gifted students, students with disabilities, students learning English, and students with other diverse learning needs.

The general education classroom needs to be an environment which is responsive to the educational needs of all children. A continuum of services must also be available through the school so that all students can participate fully in the educational program and mission of the school. This section of the application should describe the school's programs and services, and how they will be implemented within the context of the proposed school. The applicant should consider the stated target population and priority to serve economically disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, or limited English proficient students (also referred to as English learners or English language learners).

*Proposals are required to:*

**1. For struggling students:**

- Describe how the proposed school will define and identify which students are struggling.
- Describe the intervention strategies that will be used for struggling students.
- Make a case for these particular intervention strategies. What research or experiences or best practices support these decisions?
- Discuss when the interventions will occur.
- Describe the process by which intervention strategies will be evaluated and refined over time.

**2. For students learning English:**

[Information on the laws, regulations, and best practices relating to students learning English.](#)

- Demonstrate an awareness of the rights and appropriate expectations for students learning English. Acknowledge which laws and regulations govern the standards and services for these students, and provide an assurance that your proposed school will comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Describe the procedures that the proposed school will use to identify students who are learning English.
- Explain how the school will ensure ELs are not over or under-identified, and will be identified separately from procedures used to evaluate special education students.
- Discuss the English language instructional program that the school will employ for its ELs, examples of its effectiveness, and/or the research base that supports it. Explain when and where EL services will be provided, within the confines of the schedule.
- Explain the resources that will be employed to properly implement the English language instructional program.

- Describe the EL staffing levels per year for each of the five years of the term. Include assumptions and indicate what may change depending on the population that enrolls.
- Explain how the school intends to evaluate the effectiveness of the EL program and make changes if necessary.
- Discuss how the school will ensure that parents can access all necessary materials.
- Discuss how other programming, including extracurricular activities, will be accessible to ELs.
- Describe the school's professional development plan for supporting teachers in serving students who are learning English.
- Describe how general education and EL teachers will coordinate.

### **3. For students with disabilities:**

[Information on the laws, regulations, and best practices relating to students with disabilities.](#)

- Demonstrate an awareness of the rights and appropriate expectations for students with disabilities. Acknowledge which laws and regulations govern the standards and services for these students, and provide an assurance that your proposed school will comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Describe procedures that the proposed school will use to identify students with disabilities. Be sure to address how the school will ensure students are not inappropriately diagnosed.
- Explain the resources and services that will be provided to students with disabilities within general education classrooms, and the methods to be used.
- Discuss the resources and services that will be provided to students with disabilities outside of general education classrooms, and the methods to be used. Explain where and when these services will be provided, within the confines of the schedule.
- Discuss the research and other evidence that supports the appropriateness of the school's approach. Indicate the special education staffing levels per year for each of the five years of the term. Include assumptions and indicate what may change depending on the population that enrolls. Include administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals, specialists, aides, and other personnel.
- Explain any services or settings that will be provided by a third party.
- Describe the school's professional development plan for supporting teachers in serving students with disabilities.
- Discuss the process for coordination between general education and special education teachers.
- Describe how parents of special education students will be informed of their rights and responsibilities, will be involved in the process, and will have access to all requisite personnel and materials.
- Explain how the effectiveness of the special education program will be evaluated. Explain who would be responsible for making changes to the types of services provided.

#### **4. For gifted or advanced students:**

- Provide a clear rationale for how the school will define and identify students as gifted or advanced.
- Describe resources, methods, and services (including personnel) that will be provided to gifted or advanced students. Include research and other evidence that support this approach.
- Describe the school's professional development plan for supporting teachers in serving gifted or advanced students.

#### **IV(e). Assessment System**

Charter schools are expected to develop a comprehensive assessment system. A comprehensive assessment system will include (but should not be limited to) state assessments, and serves as a structure for how teachers and administrators will measure what students know and are able to do from attending your school. A comprehensive assessment system should measure the academic progress of individual students, cohorts of students over time, and the school as a whole, and will provide information to a variety of stakeholders about whether the school is an academic success.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Discuss several of the questions your school will seek to answer or track progress through its assessment system.
- Describe the types of assessments that will be used at the school. Organize the discussion by content area and grade level.
- Discuss what will happen with assessment results once collected. How the data be used, and by whom?
- For externally developed and commercially available assessments, please describe the criteria the school will use to select these assessments. If school-developed, please describe the process the school will use to create assessments and ensure validity.

#### **IV(f). Promotion and Graduation Policy**

*Proposals are required to:*

- Explain the proposed standards for promoting students from one grade to the next. Include in the description any provisions related to retention of students. For high schools, include any school-specific graduation requirements.
- Address how the school will inform parents about promotion and graduation decisions.

#### **IV(g). School Culture**

This subsection prompts applicants to describe what will foster and maintain a healthy school culture and environment for the benefit of the whole school community. It also asks applicants to discuss the character skills and behaviors that will be valued at the school.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Include a compelling description of the culture at the school, and how the culture and climate of the school is related to student outcomes and expectations.
  - Provide a description of the strategies that will be used to establish the desired school culture and/or climate, including the research, experiences, and other evidence that informs these decisions.
  - Provide plans for maintaining a safe and orderly environment, including behavior management and discipline procedures. These plans must be supported by research and evidence from experience and best practices.
  - Provide an assurance that the applicants will craft a comprehensive discipline policy in compliance with all federal, state and local laws and regulations, including a general discipline policy and a special education discipline policy.
  - Discuss whether the school will have a dress code, the rationale behind the decision, and how the school will ensure the dress code is not a mandatory fee or a financial strain to families.
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## **V. Personnel**

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### **V(a). Establishing Persons or Entities**

Only certain persons or entities are eligible to establish charter schools in Rhode Island, as identified in RIGL § 16-77.2, 16-77.3, or 16-77.4. Please provide information on the person or entity that is establishing this charter school.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Discuss the mission of the establishing person or entity and how their mission aligns with that of the applicant group.
- Describe any affiliations between members of the applicant group and the establishing person or entity (e.g. prior or current employment, family member, membership on board of trustees).
- Describe the role the establishing person or entity will play if the school is approved.

**REQUIRED:** Signature from person or representative of establishing entity on Application Cover Page.

### **V(b). Applicant Group**

All strong charter proposals begin with a strong applicant group. The applicant group should be comprised of individuals who intend to have an ongoing role in the school if approved, and/or have played a substantial role in crafting the charter school proposal. The applicant group must include at least one person or representative of the entity eligible to establish the charter school, as defined above in Part V(a). The applicant group also may include proposed school leaders, staff, governing board members, and partners.

Strong, successful applicant groups are diverse in background and experience. Strong applicant groups should exemplify the core competencies, skills, and levels of experience required to successfully start and operate a charter school. If the proposed school has a unique mission, or is proposing to create a specialized program, the applicant group should clearly reflect an ability to fulfill that mission or program.

All members of the applicant group will be expected to participate in a capacity interview as a part of the proposal review process, and should be able to speak with a depth of knowledge about the school plans.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide a list of individuals that comprise the applicant group, along with brief biographical descriptions.
- Describe how the applicant group was formed and the relationship of its members to each other.

- Describe each applicant group member’s role in crafting the proposal, and the role each intends to fill, if any, in the school if approved.

REQUIRED: Signature of applicant group member on Application Cover Page

REQUIRED ATTACHMENT: resumes for all members of the applicant group.

### **V(c). Board Development and Duties**

Charter school boards are independent public boards with the authority to govern and oversee charter schools. These boards must be equipped to oversee the academic performance of the school and ensure organizational sustainability, including oversight and management of public funds. Charter school boards must be comprised of individuals who have the background and skills to handle decisions on a range of issues, all of which impact the success of the charter school. In return, charter school boards have the autonomy to govern new innovative public schools that change the way students are educated in Rhode Island.

RIGL § 16-2-9 describes the general powers and duties of Rhode Island school committees. Charter school boards share many of these responsibilities. They must comply with the requirements of RI Open Meetings Law (16-42-46) and the regulations of the RI Ethics Commission. Ultimately, the board is accountable to the terms and conditions of the final Charter.

Because board duties begin shortly after preliminary approval, it is important that skilled and eligible individuals are prepared to form and serve on the governing board of the proposed charter school at the point of proposal submission.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide an assurance that the board will comply with all applicable laws and regulations.
- Describe a process for board member recruitment, review, and election to the charter school board that acknowledges the skills required to successfully govern a charter school.
- Provide a table that includes a list of board positions, the individuals who have committed to serving on the school’s board, and the position or role they intend to play. In places where board positions have not yet been filled, please write “vacant” and describe what type of person would best fit that position (e.g. parent, legal expert, etc.)
- Discuss any affiliations between proposed board members and:
  - persons or entities establishing the school
  - comprehensive management providers or partners
  - other contractors or consultants who may provide services to the proposed school
  - each other



- Describe the process by which the board will oversee academic performance.
- Describe the process by which the board will oversee school finances.
- Describe the process by which the board will hire a school leader.
- Describe the process by which the board will hold school leader(s) accountable.
- Describe the process by which teachers and parents can challenge decisions of the board.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENT: draft bylaws

REQUIRED ATTACHMENT: résumés of proposed board members

### **V(d). Staffing Plans**

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide an organizational chart (graphic) for the school, and a brief narrative explaining the chart. The chart should describe the reporting structure and relationships of the school's leader, other administrators, teachers, specialists, and other staff members.
- Provide a staffing chart that includes each position and quantity of staff for each year of a five-year charter term. Be sure that the staffing chart responds to all requirements for providing services to students, including special education administration and health program duties. Note any assumptions that were made about the student population to construct this staffing plan.

NOTE: Please ensure that staff titles/descriptions are consistent throughout the proposal.

### **V(e). Leadership**

*Proposals are required to:*

- Attach a job description for the school's leader. The job description should include a thorough description of the required core competencies, desired skills, expectations, and duties of the school leader.
- If the proposed school board has already selected a proposed school leader, please include a resume and a description of the recruitment process. If the board has not yet committed to a school leader, discuss how the applicant group/board will recruit and select a school leader.
- Provide brief job descriptions of administrators, directors, and other support personnel that comprise the administrative team (including academics, finance, operations, recruitment, parent coordinator, etc.).

- Provide information on the terms and conditions of employment and the qualifications that the employees must meet, including certification.
- Discuss the process by which deputies and directors will be evaluated.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENT: school leader job description

VOLUNTARY ATTACHMENT: resume of proposed school leader

## **V(f). Teachers**

Strong proposals will give considerable attention to teachers, including the factors that influence and support high-quality teaching and the skills and characteristics of teachers that will be successful at the proposed school. Strong responses will draw a clear and convincing picture of how the proposed school will support and supervise its teachers.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Describe the specific qualities and characteristics that will be sought in teachers at the proposed charter school, and explain the link between the desired characteristics and the mission and educational program of the school.
- Describe a comprehensive process of teacher recruitment and selection.
- Provide information on the terms and conditions of employment and the qualifications that the employees must meet, including certification.
- Describe the teaching program of typical teachers. Indicate how many hours they will be in class and what other responsibilities they will have.
- Discuss strategies the school will employ to retain high-performing teachers.
- Describe what structures will exist within the typical school week will be implemented to provide teachers with professional development and supports.
- Explain how teachers will be evaluated.
- Describe how the school will support teachers, including how the school will determine the professional development needs and what opportunities will be available.
- Discuss the nature and extent of involvement of teachers in the governance and operations of the proposed school.

## **V(g). Management Organizations and Other Essential Partners**

This subsection is designed to elicit information about comprehensive management providers or other contracted partners whose unique relationship and services to the school will be integral to the operations of the school, such that the charter school's mission, educational program, governance or management structure would fundamentally change if the relationship ended. Examples of essential partners may be charter management organizations (CMOs), school districts, or institutions of higher education.

If the proposed school does not intend to have comprehensive management or essential partner organizations, applicants may mark this subsection "not applicable."

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide the name, contact information, and general information about the organization, district, or institution with which the applicant group proposes to contract for management, support, or partner services.
- Provide a detailed description of the services to be provided, including scope of services, school-specific staff role(s) to be filled, fees to be paid, methods of contract oversight and enforcement, and conditions for renewal and termination of the contract.
- Include an operating/business plan from the managing or partnering entity, which should include any additional plans the organization has to provide services to other entities or schools, and which should demonstrate its capacity to provide the contracted services with the proposed new school.
- If applicable, provide a summary of student achievement results for the other schools managed by or partnered with the management organization.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENT: most recent audit of managing or partnering entity.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENT: most recent annual report of managing or partnering entity.

REQUIRED ATTACHMENT: draft term sheet or contract between management/ partnering entity and proposed charter school.

## **V(h). Family-School Partnership**

RIDE expects all schools to proactively develop a robust partnership with families, to support the success of students.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide a comprehensive explanation of how parents or guardians will be made to feel welcome at the school, and enable them to be involved in the school community.

- Describe the nature and extent of parent involvement in the governance and operations of the school.
  - Discuss a set of strategies the school will employ to ensure parents are empowered and supported.
  - Describe how the school will measure and respond to levels of parent and student satisfaction.
-

## VI. Schedule & Calendar

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Applicants must provide draft schedules for students and teachers, and an annual calendar for the proposed school's first year of operation. The structures in schedule and calendar must account for the statutory requirement to provide appropriate hours/days of instruction, and should tie back to the program plans described in Section IV: Educational Program.

In proposing a school schedule and calendar for the first year of operation, reviewers should have a sense of the breadth of opportunities available for students, both inside and outside of the typical school day.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide a draft daily schedule and narrative that describes the length of each school day, including how much time will be offered for various components of the educational program and clearly aligns with the needs of students and the mission and educational program of the school.
- Provide a draft weekly schedule and narrative that describes how the educational program is rolled out over a typical week. Include before or after-school opportunities for electives, intervention, remediation, tutoring, and extracurricular activities as applicable.
- Attach a draft school calendar that includes:
  - Total days of instruction for the school year
  - First and last day of classes
  - Organization of the school year (e.g. trimesters, semesters)
  - All planned holidays/ days off
  - Dates for professional development, special days scheduled for mission-specific requirements (e.g. portfolio demonstrations, college days, science fairs etc.)
  - Dates for extended or summer programs, if applicable
- Provide a draft schedule of a teachers' work week including:
  - Time devoted to core teaching
  - Time devoted to planning
  - Time devoted to professional development
  - Time devoted to other activities that may be unique to the proposed school's mission or culture

REQUIRED ATTACHMENT: draft school calendar

## VII. Student Enrollment, Outreach, and Demand

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Strong charter school proposals include outreach plans that are designed to reach every eligible student, and includes methods that are likely to achieve the target student population described in *Section II: Community Needs and Support*.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide a table indicating student enrollment expectations for the first charter term and then beyond (if the school proposes to grow beyond the first five-year term). Include in the table the number of students in each grade by year, and by school site (if more than one).

NOTE: while it is essential to understand the full growth plan for a proposed charter school, an approved proposal from RIDE does not signify approval for additional growth beyond the first five year charter term. Additional growth will be considered by RIDE and the Council at the point of five-year term renewal.

- Provide a clear rationale for the school's growth plan that contemplates the benefits and challenges of enrolling more or less students per year.
    - Explain in detail the rationale for selecting this particular school size.
    - Discuss assumptions regarding student attrition and the school's plan to replace students if/when spots are vacated.
  - Summarize the school recruitment process and explain how the school and its program will be publicized and marketed throughout the community to a broad cross-section of prospective students including to families traditionally less informed about school options.
  - Describe an enrollment process that includes a plan for a public lottery, including any weights or special design considerations, and is open, fair, and in accordance with the charter school statute and regulations.
-

## VIII. Facilities

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Finding a suitable facility for a new and growing charter school is a highly challenging component of new school planning. Charter schools that begin with few students and grow over time will find that they must, on the one hand, find a facility they can manage both operationally and financially, and on the other, minimize the impact of future transitions on existing students and programs. Financial and organizational health and sustainability is highly dependent on careful facilities planning.

This section prompts applicants to consider these challenges, and provide a plan for seeking facilities that fits within the program needs.

NOTE: applicants should not list specific facilities or addresses at the proposal stage. RIDE and the applicant will have opportunities to discuss the selection and approval of facilities for use by charter schools.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Include a set of facilities specifications demonstrating that the applicants understand how program drives facility needs. The specifications should include characteristics relative to site location, building layout, and other building (internal) and site (external) features that would permit the school to operate smoothly and efficiently. Consider the number of core classrooms that are required, other spaces, and square footage of core instructional spaces.
- Describe how facility needs will be impacted by the school's enrollment plan (i.e. how enrolling more students in subsequent years will impact use of the space). If applicable, discuss the timeline by which the school would make significant capital investments, add space, or move from one space to another.
- Describe the plan for and progress toward finding a facility. If applicable, describe the potential challenges of finding a suitable facility, and how you plan to overcome those challenges.
- Summarize your understanding of annual or otherwise regular updates and reports relative to compliance with facilities-related state and local laws and regulations. As this regulatory environment can be challenging and cross various local and state agencies, indicate where they may be gaps in your understanding of the regulatory environment, and how you plan to fill those gaps.
- Provide an assurance that the RIDE Office of Charter Schools will be provided with the terms and conditions for use of a facility, including draft lease or purchase agreements, once a space has been identified.
- Include a description of how the charter school board will support and oversee facilities-related issues.
- Indicate who will oversee operations and maintenance issues at the charter school.

## IX. Operations

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Charter schools in Rhode Island are local education agencies (LEAs). As such, they are responsible for arranging and managing operational services for students. For the purposes of this proposal, “operations” is defined as the coordination and planning required to ensure that the proposed school will operate safely, and that instructional staff have the information and resources they need to perform their duties.

Rules, regulations and resources relating to school health programs and school safety can be found at: <http://www.thriveri.org/>

*Proposals are required to:*

- Demonstrate an understanding of the statutory and regulatory requirements for school health programs and school safety plans. Provide an assurance that your school will comply with these requirements.
  - Describe plans for developing school safety and emergency response plans.
  - Describe plans for providing health services to all students, including a plan to hire a nurse.
  - Explain the proposed school’s food service and nutrition program.
  - Explain the proposed school’s plan for the transportation of students to and from the school, including logistics for arrival and dismissal.
  - Explain the proposed school’s plan for human resources, payroll, and purchasing functions.
  - Explain the proposed school’s plan for information technology (IT) and data management.
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## **X. Startup Timeline**

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Provide a timeline for the school startup period, dating from the anticipated point of preliminary approval through the date of school opening.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Outline a plan that includes the steps necessary for a successful school launch, and ensures that schools meet the regulatory requirements for readiness by the point of final approval.
  - Provide a timeline that lists specific actions to be taken.
  - Align with all planning activities discussed throughout the proposal.
  - Name a point person accountable for actions on the timeline.
  - Include any supplemental information that may be applicable.
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## **XI. Variances**

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To the extent allowable in state law, applicants are permitted to request variances from statutes or regulations that may inhibit operation of the proposed charter school. Statutory provisions that may not be waived are itemized in statutes specific to [district charter](#), [independent charter](#), and [mayoral academies](#).

*Proposals are required to:*

- Identify the state statutes and/or regulations from which variances are sought in order to facilitate operation of the proposed charter school. Explain the purpose of each variance, and the alternative method by which the concern that gave rise to the law or regulation will be addressed.

FOR DISTRICT CHARTER SCHOOLS ONLY: If any, include which provisions of the collective bargaining agreement will not be applicable to the district charter school. As any provisions included herein are subject to agreement by the parties to the collective bargaining agreement, please also include a letter of support from any and each party to the agreement acknowledging support.

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## **XII. Finance and Budget**

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Proposals must include a five-year budget projection for the proposed charter school. A template for the budget, the Rhode Island Charter School Budget Projection Workbook, is available on RIDE Charter Schools Webpage. Note there are multiple tabs and two different versions depending on the type of charter proposal.

In addition to the budget projection, applicants must craft a narrative section that justifies the assumptions in the budget projection, and explain how all funds will be managed.

*Proposals are required to:*

- Provide a complete and realistic five-year budget projection that appropriately reflects the expenses related to all commitments in the proposal, and indicates that the school can sustain over the five-year charter term and beyond.
- Provide a budget narrative that thoroughly justifies the costs and assumptions made in the budget projection. Included in the five-year budget narrative must be a description of the sources of revenue and expenses for the school's facility, including lease/ debt service as well as estimated operations/maintenance costs, indicating that facilities expenses will not overly burden or strain school operations. Strong proposals will be extremely conservative relative to anticipated private funding streams.
- Provide an overall plan for financial management that includes:
  - a description of the management and oversight of finances at the school, including any staff positions for this purpose and their duties;
  - assurances that the school will comply with reporting to the Office of Municipal Affairs and State Auditor General under RIGL 16-77.2-8; 16-77.3-8; 16-77.4-8
  - assurances that the school board will annually seek and approve an operational budget and cash flow statement, with a copy to RIDE.
  - assurances that the school will complete a fiscal audit each year with an independent firm, with a copy to RIDE

**REQUIRED ATTACHMENT:** five-year budget projection

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### **XIII. Additional Requirements**

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#### **District Charter Schools**

If the proposed charter school is a conversion of a district school into a district charter school, the applicant must:

- provide evidence of affirmative votes from two - thirds (2/3) of the teachers assigned to the school;
- provide evidence that parents and legal guardians representing a majority of students assigned to the school adopt the conversion plan.

If the proposed school is a new district charter school, the applicant must:

- provide evidence of affirmative support of the number of certified teachers employed within the school district where the district charter school is to be located at least equal to two-thirds of the number of teachers that will be required to staff the proposed district charter school.

#### **Independent Charter Schools**

If the proposed school is an independent charter school, the applicant must:

- submit its financial records and financial plan for review by the auditor general as prescribed by RIGL 16-77.3-2(c)
- If proposing a network charter (refer to FAQ #3 & #4), provide written support from proposed enrolling communities. If written support is not available, explain why and provide a plan for obtaining written support by the anticipated date of preliminary approval.

#### **Mayoral Academies**

If the proposed school is a mayoral academy, the applicant must:

Proposed mayoral academies must have approval from each city or town regarding participation in the academy's enrolling communities (catchment area). Approval must be from each mayor or in the absence of a mayor, the city or town council via a resolution or ordinance. (refer to FAQ #3 & #4). If written support is not available, explain why and provide a plan for obtaining written support by the anticipated date of preliminary approval.

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## Required Attachments

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- ✓ Resumes of each member of applicant group
  - ✓ Resumes of prospective Board members
  - ✓ Draft bylaws
  - ✓ School leader job description
  - ✓ Audit of managing/partnering entity (if applicable)
  - ✓ Annual report of managing/partnering entity (if applicable)
  - ✓ Draft term sheet or contract with managing/partnering entity (if applicable)
  - ✓ Draft school calendar
  - ✓ Five-year budget projection
  - ✓ Any relevant written support currently obtained for proposed network charters or mayoral academies (if available).
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